



Connecticut's Statewide AIDS Coalition

**Public Testimony
Public Health Committee
4 March 2007**

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Senator Handley, Representative Sayers, members of the committee. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I'm Shawn Lang, Director of Public Policy with the CT AIDS Resource Coalition, CT's only statewide AIDS Coalition. I also co-chair the AIDS LIFE Campaign our statewide AIDS policy group and sit on the Community Advisory board and Executive Committee of CIRA (the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS) as well as the board of the National AIDS Housing Coalition and the Convening Committee of the Federal AIDS Policy Partnership.

I'm here to ask for your support of Raised Bill 1253, An Act Concerning Immunity for Treatment of Drug Overdoses with Opioid Antagonists. The bill calls for some minor changes to clarify when health care professionals are immune from liability for prescribing, dispensing or administering an opioid antagonist, like Naloxone to treat or prevent a drug overdose.

Administering Naloxone or Narcan is standard treatment for preventing a heroin overdose.

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- ✦ Deaths from heroin overdose have increased steadily over the past decade, primarily due to the absence of any public health measures aimed at reducing them.
 - ✦ Between 1998 and 2001, 261 people in Connecticut died from drug overdoses.
 - ✦ Most overdoses are witnessed and therefore preventable.
 - ✦ People are MOST at risk of overdose upon their release from prison or from a drug treatment program.

Within the Chicago Recovery Alliance's programs, began an overdose peer prevention program in 2001. By May of 2005, more than 4 500 10ml vials of naloxone had been prescribed and 322 reports of peer overdose reversals were received. Since the program's inception, there was a 20% decrease in overdose deaths in 2001 and 10% decreases in both 2002 and 2003.

I urge you to support these important changes. Thank you.